

Highlights from the London Conference

by Gerald Oliver

Approximately 300 travel industry professionals met from 25-27 May in London for the 2004 HEDNA conference. The programme provided extensive detail on global topics. Delegates attended from the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, India, Italy, Japan, Singapore and the United States.

Feedback over the new conference format was strongly positive. This included interactive plenary sessions that dealt in depth with pivotal industry topics, providing a great deal more practical information than is generally available at any other industry conference.

HEDNA President Audrey J. Sieh commented on "the energy that drove lively discussions on topics impacting everyone's bottom-line, clarifying complex issues that will help our member companies operate more efficiently and grow stronger."

The conference was kicked-off by travel-industry leader Dinesh Dhamija, Founder, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of ebookers plc - and then concluded by John F. Davis III, Chairman of the Board, Chief Executive Officer & President of Pegasus Solutions. Provocative "Point-Counter Point" panels drew insightful debates from industry leaders on topics such as availability bursting, best-rate guarantee, product placement and distribution strategies. Presentations on the state of the industry offered updated statistics, giving attendees useful information to take back to the office and re-examine the growth of their business.

GDS and IDS Panel discussions featured senior executives from Orbitz, Expedia/Hotels.com, Hotwire, Travelocity, Cendant Travel Distribution Services, Amadeus and Sabre Travel Network. IDS panellists concentrated on how to gain more business from partnerships and understand new connectivity options - as well as sharing insights into their own future offerings. GDS panellists discussed recent developments, future product and marketing goals, and their view of current trends. Key discussion points around the transformation of the GDSs included packaging functionality, new business models, the impact of CRS deregulation and the future of shopping and reservations-processing connectivity solutions.

Networking among delegates is always a core feature of HEDNA conferences. London 2004 was no different, with the notable example relating to TO automation. As a result of the attendance of ETOA representatives, further discussions are being held - and will be reported on in the next issue of this newsletter. The networking process was helped as ever by a Technology Showcase that featured many of the hottest products and services from top vendors in the industry.

Presentations by keynote speakers, together with a detailed presentation on electronic booking trends by region and worldwide are available for HEDNA members only.

The next HEDNA Conference will be held 7-9 December in Los Angeles, California at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel. For more information call +1-703-970-2070.